

MINUTES

County of Inyo WATER COMMISSION

March 31, 2021

The Chairperson called the Water Commission meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. via videoconference. Water Commissioners in attendance were Randy Keller, Nate Gratz, Paul Huette, and Holly Alpert. Chairperson Teri Red Owl was absent. Present from the Water Department were Aaron Steinwand and Laura Piper.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

The Vice Chairperson led the pledge of allegiance.

2. Public Comment

Sally Manning stated she doesn't see an update on W415; she would like an update on the lawsuit with LADWP over the dump; as well as items discussed at the Standing Committee meeting regarding the McNally Ponds and substitute projects; and forming a subcommittee for these options; if Inyo County is submitting comments on the Urban Water Management Plan; and will the public see the comments before the letter is sent. Daris Moxley inquired about minutes of the last meeting; Laura Piper stated they are on the website.

3. Approval of minutes from the January 21, 2021 meeting

Motion by Nate Gratz, seconded by Holly Alpert to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2021 meeting. The Vice Chairperson called a roll call vote; Randy Keller – Y, Holly Alpert – Y, Paul Huette – Y, Nate Gratz – Y, motion passed.

4. Commissioners' reports

Commissioner Alpert stated the IRWMP recently signed a contract for a grant from DWR to implement three local projects; a backup generator for the Crowley Lake Mutual Water Company; an additional wastewater pond for the Big Pine CSD; and a septic system at the Armargosa Opera House. Commissioner Keller stated that in the last Standing Committee meeting LADWP provided a presentation on the proposed Urban Water Management Plan (Plan) for the next 25 years and stated they did not intend to increase exports; and both Inyo County Supervisor Matt Kingsley and Commissioner Red Owl stated they would love to see the Plan show a decrease in the Owens valley. Commissioner Huette inquired about pumping plan comments.

The Vice Chairperson stated item 6 of tonight's agenda will precede item 5.

5. Director's report

a. Runoff and operations update

Aaron Steinwand provided the latest update on the runoff and operations and stated snowpack was 51% of normal and explained the factors in determining the runoff forecast. He stated pumping to date is a total of 68,764 af through February which is approximately 80% of what LADWP planned. The Board and staff discussed this in detail.

b. Fish Springs Hatchery monitoring update

Aaron Steinwand stated we are continuing to monitor the effects of the reduction of pumping at Fish Springs Hatchery on water levels around Big Pine. It was reported at the last meeting one well had gone on instead of

the normal two; and W330 has run since January/February. He reviewed the reads on various wells and that water levels were stable in the deep aquifer with the shallow aquifer recovering; monitoring sites to the north are continuing a typical pattern; reviewed the graphs on the various wells and affected water levels. The Board and staff discussed the patterns and wish for continued monitoring after the second well goes on.

c. 385W update

Aaron Steinwand stated the well test was completed last year; Inyo/LA staff prepared technical reports on the hydrogeologic effects during the test; Ca Dept. of Fish & Wildlife reported they were having a hydrologist evaluate the data also and Inyo is waiting on that report. Lynn Boulton asked what the maximum total pumping that is a safe amount where no area in the valley is over pumped. Sally Manning discussed the pumping recommendation; well exceptions; and mitigation. Lynn Boulton discussed pumping totals and effects, and the pumping plan; Aaron Steinwand discussed how these numbers are evaluated and the process. Daris Moxley stated why do we respond to LADWP with recommendations when they don't consider our proposal.

6. Brown Act Refresher

John Vallejo provided a detailed PowerPoint presentation on the Brown Act. He reviewed its purpose, meetings, public participation, serial meetings, meeting materials, and how members of a legislative body can respond to email and social media; and all teleconference meetings require a roll call vote for action items. The Board and staff discussed this in detail. Sally Manning stated she thought this was a good overview of the Brown Act and provided her opinion on various items, misinformation, holding more meetings, and more communication with constituents. Daris Moxley inquired if the Technical Group was governed by the Brown Act and could Mr. Vallejo follow up on this for verification.

7. Owens Lake Groundwater Project update

Aaron Steinwand stated LADWP released a draft initial study and pumping test of test well east at Owens Lake; the well is located on the lake bed; the proposed test is for 6 months; the County provided comments on the initial study negative declaration; and stated there was a 30 day comment period in which LADWP can respond. Lynn Boulton inquired how many times has the county disputed the pumping plan and how many times has the result been in the counties favor; and if LADWP continued to put briny water on the lake bed wouldn't that cause more impact. Sally Manning stated the Big Pine Paiute Tribe submitted a comment letter; AB52 tribal consultation is incomplete; this pumping is discretionary; and the County should say no to this pumping test. Nancy Masters asked does LADWP hold that the lake is adjudicated (LTWA) or unadjudicated (SGMA).

8. Status of Blackrock Waterfowl Management Area Interim plan

Aaron Steinwand stated there is an idea to alter the management of the Blackrock Waterfowl Management Area, an interim plan for the next five years; to wet up 500 af from fall to the spring migration system; bird and vegetation monitoring; treatments of tules; the draft plan has been produced, reviewed by the MOU parties, and they have submitted comments. Legal staff is reviewing what the appropriate steps will be to approve and implement this plan. It should be presented at the May Standing Committee meeting. Gigi Coyle stated her and a few others are in agreement with Sally Manning's comments on the lake and fish hatchery pumping.

9. Future meeting schedule

The next Water Commission meeting was scheduled for April 26, 2021 with a Board workshop on Tuesday, April 27, 2021.

10. Adjourn

The Vice Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 8:09 p.m.